

**STATEMENT OF  
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS**

Re: *Addressing the Homework Gap through the E-Rate Program*, WC Docket No. 21-31, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (November 1, 2023).

During the COVID pandemic we saw firsthand the positive impact that resulted from providing Wi-Fi connectivity for students and library patrons through hotspots. With schools temporarily closed, students who had long struggled with the homework gap and digital inequality were now able to continue their education and even complete their homework at night.

So I'm glad that we have learned from our experiences in the Emergency Connectivity Fund and propose to permit eligible schools and libraries to receive E-Rate support for Wi-Fi hotspots and wireless Internet services to be used off-campus for remote learning and educational purposes. These devices, with the same restrictions for E-Rate funded hotspots as any other E-Rate funded connections in a school, would update and modernize the E-Rate program consistent with how education occurs today. We also have significant experience in creating safeguards to protect against waste, fraud, and abuse in the distribution of Wi-Fi hotspots in order to protect the Universal Service Fund. I support doing everything we can to help our children succeed in their education, and I look forward to record that develops from this *Notice* and thank FCC staff for their work on the item.